

Hanau History



Goldsmith's house downtown Hanau



Gate of the Alzenau Castle

Welcome to Hanau, Germany, the home of the Grimm Brothers, linguists and masters of German folklore. Unlike the typical tourist, you'll be here long enough to sample the lifestyle and to get to know the people. Explore Germany, take advantage of your weekends; they will slip away faster than you think. This can be the most exciting and memorable assignment of your military career.

The history of Hanau is both important and interesting. In the early hours of March 19, 1945 Hanau was violently attacked by a massive allied air strike. Close to 85 percent of Hanau was destroyed and it seemed the city, just 11 miles east of Frankfurt am Main, had suffered a mortal blow.

Today, Hanau is a small, bustling city of approximately 100,000 people. This figure includes the populations of the smaller communities of Wolfgang, Großauheim, Steinheim, Klein Auheim, Hohe Tanne, and Mittelbuchen as a result of a merger in 1974. Some 13,000 workers commute daily to Hanau.

Although Hanau received status as a city from Albrecht I in 1093, it was not until religious refugees poured into the city in 1597 that it began to flourish. Given religious freedom by the ruling Count, these refugees, mostly Dutch and Belgian Wallons, constructed a new city and started new trades, including gold and silversmithing. The refugees also built the Netherlands Wallon Double Church which stands today on Französische Allee as a monument. Hanau's Academy of Art was established in 1772 for the training of young people to work in the city's gold and silver trade. It's the oldest existing school of its kind in Germany.

The history of Hanau touched Americans during our Revolutionary War. A treaty was signed in Hanau in February 1776 to hire mercenaries. This treaty provided England's King George III with the first contingent of Hessian soldiers for use against the American Colonies. During the early years of the 19th century, Hanau was occupied by Napoleon's troops and its fortifications were destroyed. In 1886, Hanau fell into Prussian hands. At the beginning of the

20th century, Hanau's Main River port was built. This increased trade of all kinds. Despite the world wars, Hanau continued to thrive. Its gold and silver industries attracted gem and other precious metal factories. Today, the products of Heraeus, Quarzlampen Company, Dunlop Rubber, Degussa and many others are vital to the city's economic welfare.

Unlike most Army posts in CONUS, the Hanau military community is comprised of 17 smaller installations known as Kasernes. Each Kaserne has an interesting history of its own.

Pioneer Kaserne was built under Hitler's regime between 1938 and 1939. It was used by the German Railroad Recruiting and Training Battalions of the 3rd German Railroad Regiment. In 1944 and 1945 the Kaserne was damaged by an allied aerial bombardment and was later attacked by artillery fire. It was reestablished by municipal construction agencies organized by the U.S. Government. Pioneer Kaserne now houses the majority of the facilities for the support and welfare of military personnel and their family members. It's also the home of 102nd Signal Battalion, 55th Personnel Support Battalion and the 130th Engineer Brigade.

Fliegerhorst Kaserne was initially built for Hermann Göring's German Air Force in 1937. The construction plan provided for the project to extend over 15 years and was outlined in three phases. The project began in 1937, but due to the outbreak of WWII only the first phase was completed. In 1945, the U.S. Army occupied the Kaserne and used it as a signal depot, consisting of a maintenance division and a storage division. In 1952 the entire depot was transferred to Pirmasens; the installation was redesignated and assigned artillery, transportation, ordnance and aviation units of the 7th Army. Fliegerhorst currently houses aviation and maintenance facilities, government housing and support and recreation activities for service members and their families.

Wolfgang Kaserne was a former WWI ammunition factory. It was upgraded between 1936 and 1938 by the former Herresamt for use as an ammunition depot. Wolfgang is currently a modern facility housing the Hanau Military Community's shopping and entertainment district.

Yorkhof Kaserne was constructed between 1905 and 1911 and was first occupied by troops assigned to the German Army Post Depot. It's now the headquarters of the U.S. Army Garrison-Hessen.

Hutier Kaserne was constructed between 1908 and 1910. In 1920, these buildings were converted to civilian use including schools and a police headquarters. In 1936 and 1937 it was reconverted to German military use. It was at this time that the post was named Hutier in honor of a famous Prussian, General Oscar Von Hutier. Hutier is home to the 16th Corp Support Group.

Argonner Kaserne, named after the Argonner Forest, scene of the famous WWI battle, was constructed between 1937 and 1938 and occupied by the German Army Engineer NCO School. Argonner now houses medical, dental and veterinary services, a guest house, government housing, the Hanau Middle School and Hanau High School.

Büdingen is located 16 miles from Hanau and is nestled in the southwestern foothills



Historical part of Büdingen



Büdingen Castle

of the Vogelsberg Mountains. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Franks, seeking to control trade and travel, built many forts in the area enclosed by the Taunus, Vogelsberg, and Spessart Mountains. One of these forts was located at Büdingen. In the 12th century, this small sandstone fort was replaced by a Carolingian style castle surrounded by a circular stone wall. The castle, which became the residence of the lords of Büdingen, has been occupied ever since. In order to protect the city, one prince constructed a wall and moat. The wall still stands and the old town is a beautiful example of late Gothic fortification. The Thirty Years War reduced the city's population from 1500 to 500.

Today, the city has approximately 7,000 residents. Highlights of a visit to Büdingen include the Rathaus and the Widow's Residence which are both fine examples of 15th century architecture. There are also numerous gates, walls and towers from the Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque periods.

The military installation in Büdingen, formerly known as Krüger Kaserne, was constructed between 1935 and 1939 for the German Machine Gun Battalion 3. This unit was replaced in 1939 by an anti-tank battalion which was stationed there until its deployment into combat in 1944. Following the arrival of the Americans in 1945, the Kaserne was named

Armstrong Kaserne in honor of 1st Lt. Armstrong who served as an air observer for the 68th Field Artillery Battalion and was killed in action on Anzio Beach in Italy. Armstrong Kaserne is currently home to the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment of Dragoons. Büdingen is a must see place if for no other reason than to view the many varieties of frog figures that decorate the village businesses.

The German community of Gelnhausen is called home by a number of Hanau residents. Gelnhausen's official history begins in 1170 when Friedrich I (also called Barbarossa) founded the Nova Villa. Three considerably older villages were united and enlarged into one new city. Gelnhausen's location on the Kinzig River made it a prime location on a medieval trade route. Gelnhausen was one of the richest cities in the empire and attracted many wealthy merchants. From 1180 until his death, Barbarossa lived here for some time every second year. His son, Henry V, called the castle his most beloved place. Gelnhausen suffered under the Thirty Years War as well. It was raided and sacked and left uninhabitable and depopulated. After the war people came back slowly. However, those that returned were poor craftsmen and farmers, not wealthy merchants. Today, Gelnhausen has 22,000 residents and is the cultural and economical center of the Kinzig Valley.